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MMOZine

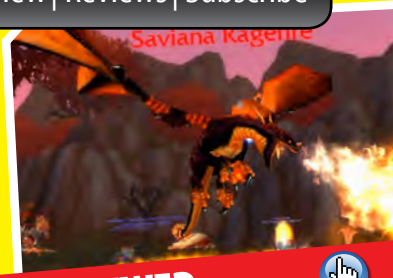
Issue 22 | July 2010

Free Magazine For MMO Gamers. Read it, Print it, Send it to your mates

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
APB
THE MMO TAKES TO THE STREETS!

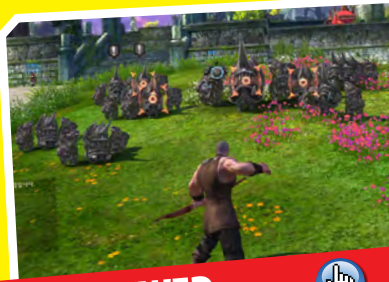
DC UNIVERSE ONLINE
Previewed inside!

MORTAL ONLINE + GLOBAL AGENDA + CLONE WARS ADVENTURES



+ REVIEWED

WoW 3.3.5
The calm before the Cataclysm?



+ PREVIEWED

TERA
The latest E3 shots and info on this exciting new MMO

+ FIRST LOOK

Warhammer 40K
The Warhammer series goes multiplayer

Welcome to MMOZine

With the dust now finally settled on the annual games manic feverishness that is the E3 show, it's time to pick through the announcements and see what we've got to look forward to.

Easily one of the most interesting titles shown there was the new Warhammer 40,000 title. There was only a trailer on display, but it was more than enough to get the gaming herds excited. We think that it could easily shape up to be something special when it's released next year.

Aside from that though, there's plenty more on the MMO radar to keep an eye on, including TERA, Mortal Online, DC Universe Online, the official NASA game Astronaut: Moon, Mars and Beyond, and much more. Enjoy the issue.

Dean Mortlock, Editor
mmozine@gamerzines.com

MEET THE TEAM

The MMOZine massive were told to go forth and multiplay, which they did…

PAUL PRESLEY
Paul isn't fond of the Lycra outfits, but he is fond of DC Universe.

LESLEY SMITH
Catadysm may be the biggie, but Lesley's happy with 3.3.5. For now…

RICHIE SHOEMAKER
Richie has an Agenda on a Global scale.

DON'T MISS!

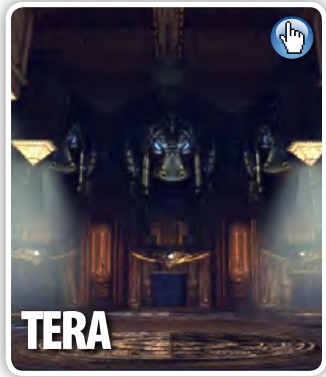
This month's highlights…

DC UNIVERSE ONLINE

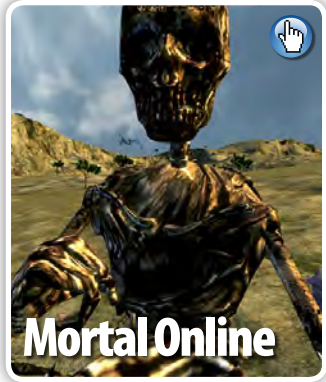
There's a new hero in town…

APB

Car wars! Exclusive interview inside



TERA



Mortal Online

QUICK FINDER

Every game's just a click away

Warhammer 40,000: Dark Millennium Online
Clone Wars Adventures
Lord of the Rings Online
Company of Heroes Online
Mythos
Fallen Earth
Allods Online
Astronaut: Moon, Mars and Beyond
APB
DC Universe Online
TLBB
TERA: The Exhiled Realm of Aborea
Mortal Online
World of Warcraft 3.3.5
Global Agenda: Sandstorm

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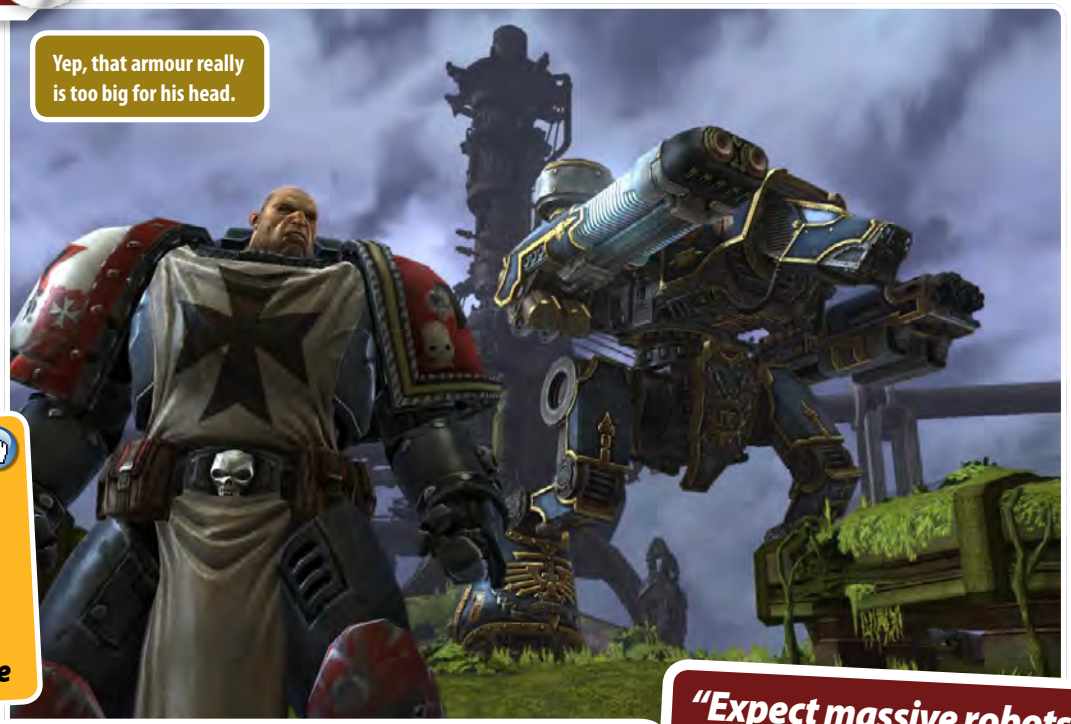
Publisher: THQ
Developer: Vigil Games
Heritage: Darksiders
Link: www.darkmillenniumonline.com
ETA: TBA

PREVIEW FEEDBACK! Click here to tell us what you think of Warhammer 40,000: Dark Millennium Online


Yep, that armour really is too big for his head.

Warhammer 40,000: Dark Millennium Online

FIRST LOOK

Stop. Hammer time

What's the story?

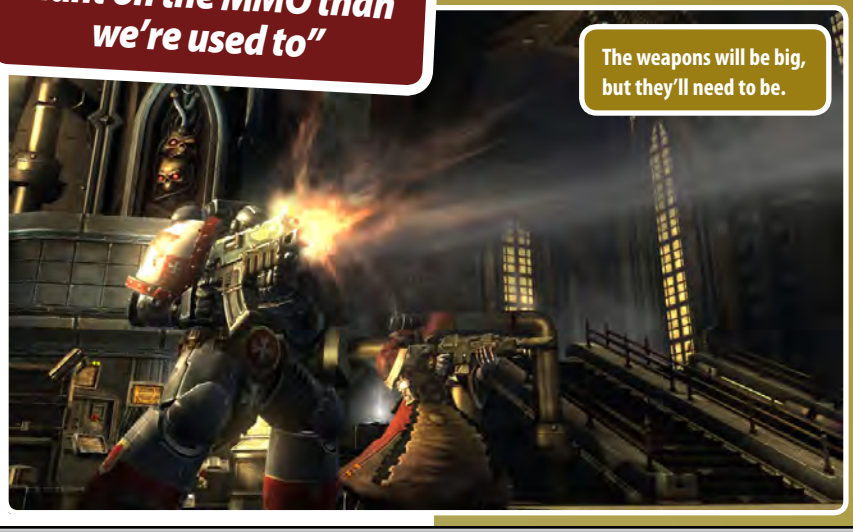
A Warhammer MMO isn't the worse idea we've ever heard, and the same is clearly true for THQ, who have green-lighted one for a release some time in the distant future. We know it's being developed by Vigil Games, who are also working on Darksiders – which will be released for the PC at the end of September.

What do we know?

Unfortunately, not very much. The trailer impressed all who saw it, but gave little away about the gameplay. Vigil Games' Joe Madureira was recently quoted as saying that although Dark Millennium will be true to the Warhammer licence, it will also feature all of the gameplay trappings of a more traditional MMO – groups, quests, etc. Expect massive robots, large weapons, a more action-based slant on the MMO than we're used to and, as you'll see from the online trailer, stunning graphics.

"Expect massive robots, large weapons and a more action-based slant on the MMO than we're used to"

Ah, there *is* going to be Orcs. We were a bit worried for a moment.


The weapons will be big, but they'll need to be.

When do we get more?

Hopefully, very soon. If the gameplay can match the graphical intensity and PR flannel spun by THQ, then we could be looking at a very special game indeed.

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Clone Wars Adventures

FIRST LOOK

Doing it for the kids

Publisher: SoE
Developer: SoE
Heritage: Free Realms, EverQuest series
Link: www.clonewarsadventures.com
ETA: TBA 2010

PREVIEW FEEDBACK! Click here to tell us what you think of Clone Wars Adventures

This Tower Defence mini-game sees you having to destroy wave after wave of Battle Droids.

"There will be plenty of mini-games to keep the interest levels up"

What's the story?

With the popularity of the 'grown up' Star Wars MMO, we suppose it was surely only a matter of time before LucasArts realised the obvious gap in the market and began work on one based on the Clone Wars TV series, which (like Clone Wars Adventures) is targeted towards a younger audience. The inevitable happened, and now we can look forward to a release of the game later in the year.

What do we know?

Development is being handled by SoE themselves, and as they're also responsible for the impressive kids' game Free Realms, it's probably fair to say that they're the right team for the job.

Featuring all the regular cast of the show (Yoda, Obi-Wan and Anakin), there will be plenty of mini-games to keep the interest level up – including space battles, puzzles, Speeder Bike racing and Tower Defence stages where you have to destroy wave upon wave of Battle Droids. There's even a card battling game thrown in too for good measure. So far, so promising.

Clone Wars Adventures will be another free-to-play game, but outfits, items and accessories can be purchased in-game with Station Cash, SoE's virtual currency.

When do we get more?

We're convinced already that Clone Wars Adventures holds a lot of promise, and so we'll be watching this one very closely. It's down for an autumn release, so we'll be looking to bring you an extensive preview in the next issue.

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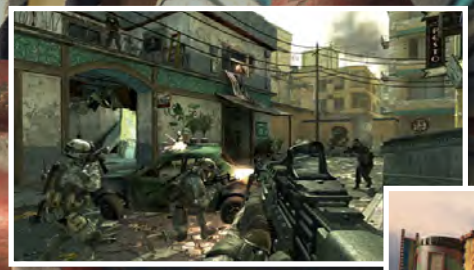
RESURGENCE PACK

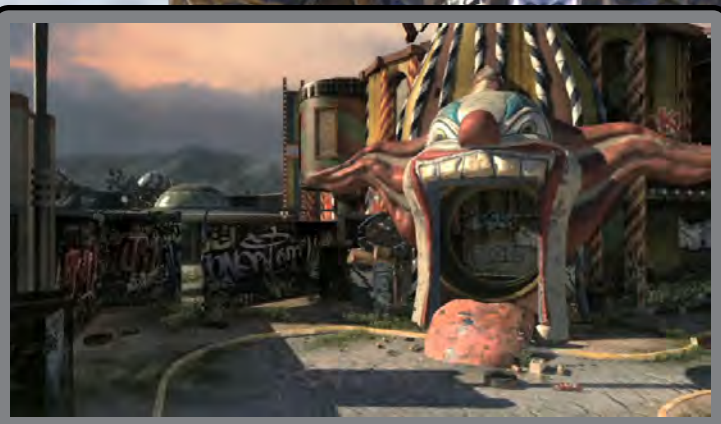

STRIKE

VACANT

CARNIVAL

TRAILER PARK

FUEL


PLAYBACK OPTIONS: ENHANCED

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7 UP

New MMOs and content updates to mark on your calendar with a BIG RED PEN!

Mythos

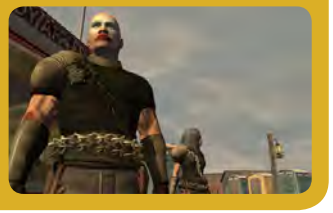
Developer: HanbitSoft | **ETA:** TBA 2011

We were surprised when Mythos was dropped before it was even released, but the good news is that Frogster are to resurrect the game with an open Beta planned for later in the year and then a full (free-to-play) release early next year. This is great news for the many fans of the game.

Fallen Earth

Developer: Fallen Earth | **ETA:** Out now

After the enormous success of its applications for the iPhone and Android systems, Fallen Earth have now revealed that the mobile app is also available for Blackberry phones and devices, too. The app (available from all the usual outlets) takes care of a lot of the character management stuff while you're offline from the game, including browsing the auction house, looking after crafting and checking out other can members.



Warhammer 40K

Developer: Vigil Games | **ETA:** TBA

This latest Warhammer game was the darling of the recent E3 show, wowing the assembled crowds with a massively impressive trailer. THQ are therefore hugely optimistic about the game's prospects, claiming that if they can attract a million gamers to it then they'll be happy (WoW had 14 million). Time will tell…

Lord of the Rings Online

Developer: Turbine | **ETA:** Out now

Liked the thought of Lord of the Rings Online but didn't really want to stump up the cash for it? Fear not then, as this autumn you'll be able to download and play the game for free. You earn Turbine points for playing through the game but, as with most free-to-play gaming models, you'll also be able to buy points from the LotRO store.

ON THE RADAR

WINTER
- Final Fantasy XIV Online

OCTOBER
- LEGO Universe

AUGUST
- Pirates of the Burning Sea: Power and Prestige

AUGUST
- City of Heroes: Going Rogue

Company of Heroes Online

Developer: THQ | **ETA:** Autumn

The clue's really in the title, as THQ are planning another massive MMO release in the shape of Company of Heroes Online. As you'd imagine, the game takes all the stunning realtime strategy action of the series and takes it online, with the ability to upgrade your army to suit your particular playing style, and also earn (or purchase, obviously) special units and upgrades. Top stuff.

Allods Online

Developer: Astrum Nival | **ETA:** Out now

There's been a beefy new patch released for Allods. Among other treats, Volume 1: Revelations of Gipat includes raising the level cap to 42, adds 100 quests and a brand new instance, too. All this gives you even more reason to play this excellent game.

Astronaut: Moon, Mars and Beyond

Developer: Virtual Heroes | **ETA:** TBA

Taking the MMO genre in a very different direction is this game, developed by Virtual Heroes (of America's Army fame) and published by NASA themselves. You'll get the opportunity to take on the role of either a roboticist, space geologist, astrobiologist or engineer, and there's a demo due out before the end of the year.

ALLODS
ONLINE
Most Anticipated MMO In 2009
КРИ 2009 ЛУЧШАЯ ИГРА
КРИ 2009 ПРИЗ ЗРИТЕЛЬСКИХ СИМПАТИЙ
PLAYBACK OPTIONS: ENHANCED
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Step 2. Download the game client
Step 3. Install and patch the game to the latest version
Step 4. Log in with your gPotato.eu username and password
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Mob rule

Will you own the streets?

We're all rather excite about APB. It's different, fun, action-packed and has a moderately hefty nod towards a certain sandbox city-based shooter. Does it have the chops to stand on its own though? We asked EA…

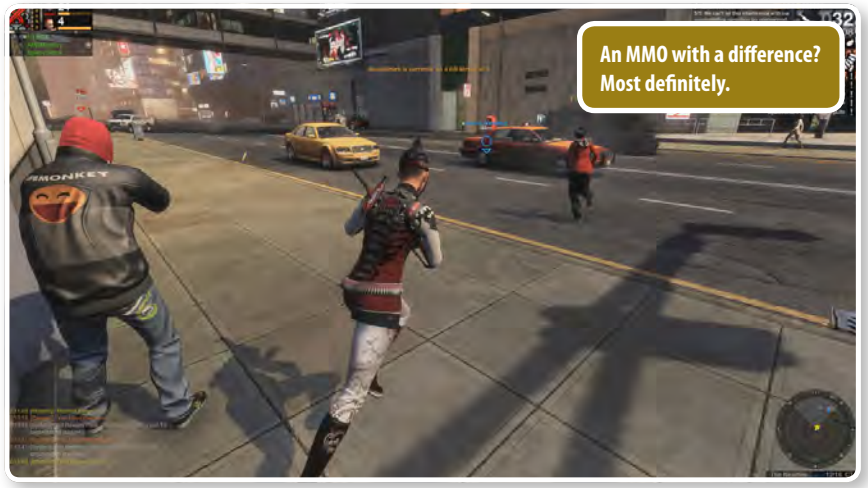
It's inevitably going to be mentioned that Dave Jones is the creator of GTA. Is that a help to you or a hindrance?
It's definitely a factor. This is the next version of Dave's vision of what he set out to do from the beginning. It's an online persistent action-based sandbox world where players engage with each other.

One of the important things about APB is we have no artificial intelligence, so every opponent you ever face will be another live player playing against you, which is more exciting and more interesting.

To the untrained eye it could be mistaken for another GTA game. Is that fair?
It's very different from GTA. Calling it GTA Online or World of Warcraft with cops 'n' robbers both really do it a disservice. It's something very unique, and messaging exactly what that is to people has been one of the challenges of the last few months. APB revolves around creating your own identity and sharing social experiences with other players. It centers around customising your characters and eventually achieving fame in the game world.

So there's 100,000 players in each world?
Each world holds 100,000 characters – which includes 10,000

> **"APB is very different from GTA. Calling it GTA Online or World of Warcraft with cops 'n' robbers both really do it a disservice"**



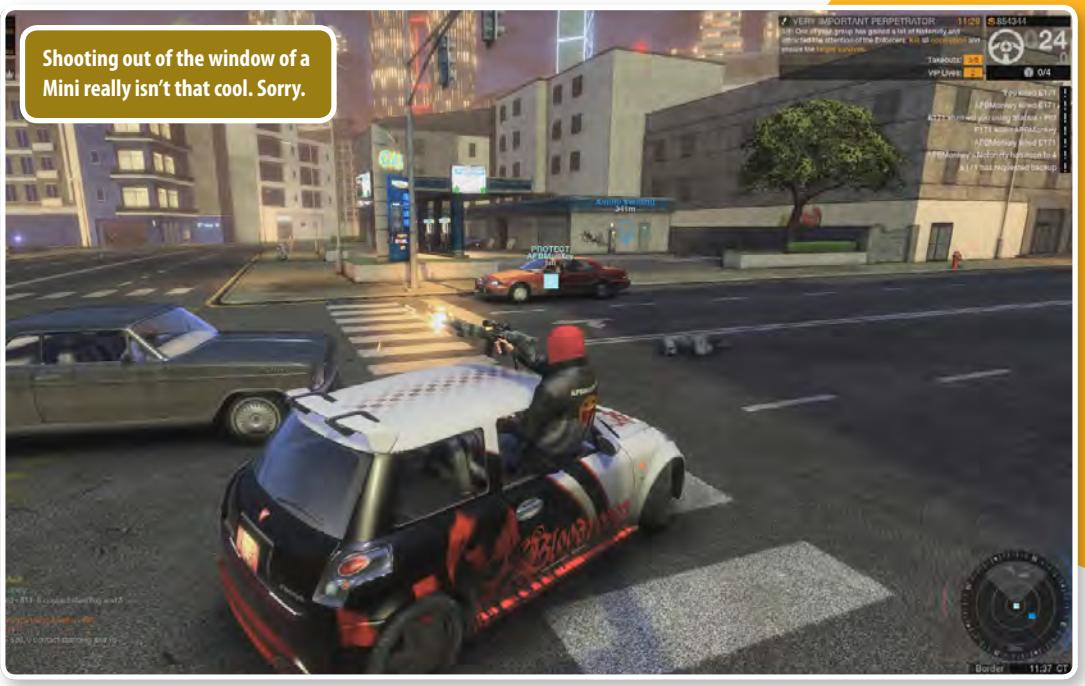
Interview continued

online simultaneously – and within that it's broken down into districts. We have three districts split into two distinct types. One is the social district, that holds 250 players at a time, for instance, and that's where you can go to customise or buy and sell items. There's no fighting there; there's peace between the

"Some missions can escalate up to a possible 20 versus 20"

Enforcers and factions and you just kind of hang out. Then we have the action districts, and there's two of those. One of them is the financial district; a skyscraper downtown area. The other one is the waterfront district. These are both about 145 square kilometres and they hold a hundred players at a time. Within that, players form groups of up to four and engage each other in missions – Criminals versus Enforcers. Those missions can escalate up to a possible 20 versus 20.

Do you have to set out from the beginning whether you're a cop or a robber?



AION

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AION NCSOFT

Interview continued

You do, but you can create multiple characters on the same world or multiple worlds. You've just got to pick your faction for that character.

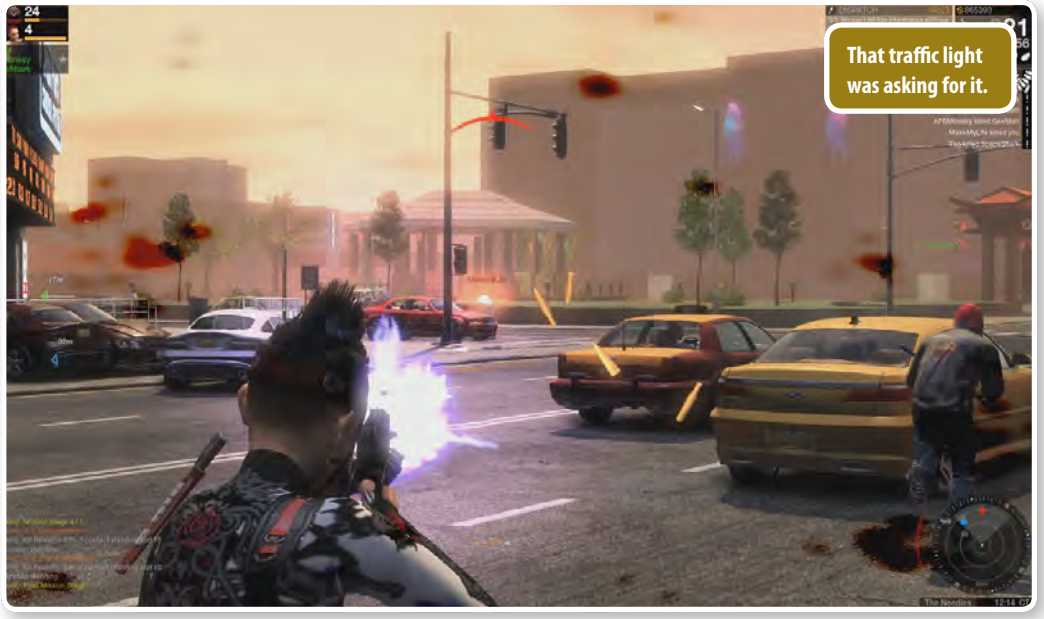
There are three choices you can't change when you make your character: what your gender is, what world you're on and what faction. Everything else you can customise once you've been in the game. One of our optimisation studios is an advanced version of the initial character creation system. It charges you some in-game currency in order to make changes.

Doesn't everybody just want to play the bad guy? Are you having trouble balancing things?

Surprisingly not. First of all we set out with that expectation, so our game does support Criminal versus Criminal matches. We find if we have an imbalance where there are more criminals it can devolve into gang warfare. However, from our Beta so far we've found that the spreads are very evenly matched. A lot more people want to play Enforcers than we ever expected.

"A lot more people want to play Enforcers than we ever expected"

How do you become the most famous person in the game?



Do you have to put the hours in, or be the most skilful, or have a great social network?

All of those things are options. You've got two primary paths to fame. On the action side of the game we've got leagues. These are leaderboards that are calculated weekly, monthly and most kills. Winning those gives you cash rewards, plus access to display items – a statue shows your character to everyone in the world, with your name on a pedestal.

Graffiti is also part of your identity, along with a variety of customisation options. We've seen some incredible customisation already in the Beta. In fact we've got one guy who creates shirts in the game and sells them in the marketplace, but he's also set up his own website where he's recreated the design and sells those shirts for real money.

Who's going to buy the game? Action gamers? Warcraft fans?

I really think there's opportunity for all sorts of buyers. We've tried to create a game that has the depth that may interest a lot of MMO gamers but the ease of use and the ability to jump in and out that will interest the more casual action-based gamers, so I think it'll appeal to a broad audience.

APB

Publisher: EA
Developer: Realtime Worlds
Heritage: Crackdown
Link: www.apb.com

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DC Universe Online

Publisher: SoE
Developer: SoE
Heritage: EverQuest II, Free Realms, Star Wars Galaxies, PlanetSide
Link: www.dcuniverse online.com
ETA: November 2010

Holding out for a hero? The wait is nearly over

For a genre dominated by swords, sorcery and scantily clad warrior women in Asian fantasy worlds, the MMO scene is also surprisingly well served by superhero games. Mostly, it has to be said, thanks to the team at Cryptic Studios, first having served up the long-running City of Heroes title then, once that had been sacrificed to the publishing overlords at NCsoft, presenting the more flamboyant Champions Online to a world gagging for the chance to dress in Spandex and shoot energy blasts from its eyeballs.

Next out of the blocks is the first of the big-name brands to strap on the capes of justice, DC Universe Online. There is, still, a Marvel MMO in the works, but it's a simplistic browser-based affair, one far removed from the original version Cryptic touted many years ago and ultimately turned into Champions.

Adventures in Metropolis, Gotham City, the Batcave, the Fortress of Solitude, S.T.A.R. Labs, Arkham Asylum and other famous DC locales – either as a hero or villain – are the order of the day. The big question, of course, is whether DCUO is shaping up to do something radically different with the MMO trappings (as seems to happen so often with online games at the moment), or whether it will be content to just tick the boxes of the traditional tropes and

CITY OF CHAMPIONS?

Certainly one of City of Heroes' big complaints was that it, well, stayed inside the city too much. Champions Online tried to diversify, but still felt too enclosed. DCUO has the world 'Universe' in its name, but so far, it all looks very 'city based'. Remember folks, even flying heroes want to see the world – and then save it.

The eyebeams give away what he was staring at.

"Adventures in Metropolis, Gotham City, the Batcave, the Fortress of Solitude, S.T.A.R. Labs, Arkham Asylum and other famous DC locales are the order of the day

Superman's having a bad hair day.

Note the lack of user interface.

This guy went on to be President of the USA, you know. You can see why.

DC Universe continued

just hope to dazzle us with fancy graphics and recognisable characters instead – as Champions was all set to do, of course, back when Cryptic had the Marvel licence and before it had to switch its assets to the less well-known tabletop role-player instead.

Without being able to go hands-on as yet, it's impossible to say for sure, but the indications given by press demonstrations at E3 this year, along with the released gameplay videos, would suggest that DCUO will share a lot in similarity with existing MMO standbys, throwing its audience hooks instead into the abundant use of physics in the combat, the inclusion of 'combos' as you battle and, of course, the presence of the famous and infamous residents of DC's universe as you fight your way towards notoriety.

Naturally, much is being made of the use of Superman, Batman, Bizarro et al, with SoE having released 'character reveals' at regular intervals over the past few months – teasing the various fanbases of DC's mighty roster. Luminaries such as Poison Ivy, Nightwing, Power Girl, Zatanna, The Flash, Green Lantern, Black Adam, Solomon Grundy, Mr Freeze and the ultimate in villains, Doomsday, have all had their 15 minutes, and the idea being presented is that these characters play an active part in your own hero's narrative arc, whether directly through missions or as part of the 'Based on' creation system.

THE FINE ART OF HITTING STUFF

DCUO puts a lot of focus on the combat, with three distinct areas given a twist

KAPOW! **KAPING!** **KAPONG!**

Physics makes up the bulk of it. It's not just enough to smack enemies down with your energy blasts. Pick up a truck and chuck it on their heads for good measure.

IF I HAD A HAMILL

While SoE is keeping specific gameplay details close to its hero logo-emblazoned chest, it is making big noises about the real-world talent being brought in to shore up DCUO's chances of scoring big. To whit, one Mark 'Luke Skywalker/voice of animated Joker' Hamill is lending his surprisingly impressive vocal acting skills to the game.

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DC Universe continued

Before you take your first supersteps in the world, you naturally have to create your fledgling hero or villain. Whether you'll be offered Champions Online levels of customisation has yet to be announced, but what we do know is that you have a choice of creating everything from scratch, or opting to base your avatar on an existing hero/villain (in-game it's said your character was 'inspired' to take up the cape by said superstar) and then tweak where appropriate. Want a Batman but based on magic? A Joker that prefers haikus and throwing hammers? A Green Arrow but red? You get the idea.

Stars in the skies

Once in-game, the 'known' stars of DC form the basis of many of your missions. You'll be jumping into action with the Justice League as they battle the latest menace to Metropolis. You'll accompany The Flash or Superman as they find the odds against them stacking a little too high. Players of Champions Online will probably recognise a little of this in the way that universe's notable heroes would act as mission givers or occasionally turn up in the game's instanced set-pieces. SoE has repeatedly boasted of the fact you'll be 'fighting alongside' the big names and most of the released gameplay teasers show the big guns going toe-to-toe on the mean streets, so the hopes that Superman is more than just a static presence asking you to kill 10 super-rats are high.

Until we can get properly hands-on with DCUO, we can't help but feel that this is going to be a similar package to the current online hero simulators, for all of SoE's talk of this being an 'action MMO'. Obviously, having the big names on-board helps to raise the bar (as does getting DC creative staffers Jim Lee, Geoff Johns and Marv Wolfman on board to help with the story crafting and art style), and the cross-platform PC/PS3 compatibility will make for some interesting team-ups, but it would be nice to think that SoE is keeping some real big game mechanic guns up its sleeve to make it anything more than Champions Online with added Batman.

The eternal battle continues...

Movement skills include flying, running, jumping but *definitely not* wall-crawling.

MMOZine Verdict

Exciting as the brand is, the true test of a champion will be the gameplay

HOW COMPLETE

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

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Design for life

An exclusive look at how illustrators go about creating characters for an MMO

> **"Due to the size of the project, one illustrator will work on a variety of different things"**

Artists are often the over-looked geniuses behind your favourite games, but no longer, as we speak to the guys behind the look of the bosses and pet in ChangYou's MMO, TLBB.

INTERVIEW #1 – BOSSES

Can you start by introducing yourself to us?
Hello everyone, my name is Ying Shi and I am from Beijing, China. I've been working for ChangYou as an illustrator now for over two years and hope to develop my career further within the company.

How long have you been an illustrator for, and did you always want to be involved in illustrating for computer games?
I've been an illustrator for over four years and used to work in a mobile phone game design company before that. My interest in PC games development and the gaming industry made me want to express my value as an illustrator (as well as my design work) and so I joined ChangYou in order to expand this facet of my work.

How did you go about designing the bosses of TLBB, and what were the main influences and inspirations for your art work?
The works of an illustrator at ChangYou and projects such as TLBB include lead set designs, mount designs, pet designs and NPC monsters, as well as other areas of artwork – boss designing is just one part of my job criteria.

Due to the size of the project, one illustrator will work on a variety of different things and not just focus on one area. I was working as an animation designer before my work became influenced by Japanese and Korean styles. However, since I got in touch with online PC games, I found I was more interested in designing Western games. I found myself reading lots of design books and studying their artwork in detail, and although my inspiration came largely from traditional Chinese culture, I realised that versatility as well as passion for art left a good impression on both me and the people looking at it.

How many concepts do you go through to get to the right one when developing the characters?
We can use our own ideas to create an image, but if we want the person or player to like what they see, then we need to take some time to think about what it is we want to design. Generally speaking, there are three types of bosses that

Combat is fast and fluid.

Interview continued

appear in games: the cute-type, abominable-type and fantasy-type. These are factors to think about when designing and, at the same time, we need to consider the story of the boss's life – where does he/she come from, what's the background, the reason the boss is an enemy and how they became the way they are.

Bosses and villains are both loved and hated in films and games. Do you enjoy drawing the villains, and do you see this as a fun part of being a designer?
It's a challenge to design any part of a game, especially an MMO that has so many different features to consider. I love designing them regardless of whether or not they are an enemy, and so the notion of a boss, although very cool, is the same for me as it would be for a hero.

It's important for me as a designer to leave an everlasting memory for any aspect of the game. If I achieve this, then I achieve a goal for both myself and the game.

TLBB is widely known for its authenticity to the book (Tian Long Ba Bu). What key ideas and features did you take from the book in order to create what we see today?
It's important to bear in mind that the game has a genuine ancient Chinese martial arts feel to it and so highlighted areas, such as the nine different classes, the cities, the skills etc. are very influential. We've tried to maintain a genuine feel to the book also, hence why the NPCs are named after characters in the original work of Louis Cha.

INTERVIEW #2 – PETS

Can you start by introducing yourself to us?
I'm one of the illustrators of TLBB. My name is Qi Wang and I'm delighted to be talking to you about TLBB.

Pets in TLBB are seen as a way to not only have a loyal sidekick, but also to help the character destroy an enemy. When designing these pets, did you have a brief on how they should look to the player? If so, how many concepts did you go through before you were happy with the results?
Before designing a pet, we will sit down and have a meeting where everyone gives input and contributes their ideas. Once we've chosen some of the best ideas, we then present what we feel is the perfect image of a pet going from the brief.

Throughout the design process there are a number of points we need to take into consideration, such as whether or not the design is popular, which style looks best,

The flora and fauna found in TLBB adds a real touch of class to the world.

This wasn't quite the 'fit bird' we were hoping for. Sigh.

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Interview continued

how the pet will look after levelling up, and so on. It's difficult to say exactly how many concepts we go through before we're happy because we go through so many stages of inspiration and different stages of scrutiny, that it can go round in circles at times.

What was your biggest challenge when creating these pets? Can you tell us which one are you most proud of and why?
The trickiest part of the design process is conceptual. As there are more and more pets in the game, it becomes more challenging to find breakthroughs in design and originality. So far, the categories we have are cute, funny, cool and ferocious. As time goes on, there could be more categories to fill and as one of my main tasks is to design novel pets, it will give me more scope for different pet designs. More recently, we designed cool-looking zombie pets, but my favourite would have to be the Beast which is seen as a Chinese legend that possesses might, strength and good looks.

> *"More recently we designed cool-looking zombie pets"*

Many Asian cartoons, characters, films and illustrations have a very different feel to the Western markets. How do you feel your designs will be interpreted by Europe and what is your main goal as a designer when creating such characters/creatures?
In my opinion, whether it's Asian cartoons or Western cartoons, everyone agrees on visually beautiful designs. Although some opinions will be different to others, our goal remains to design good-looking pets for players.

One of TLBB's main aspects is the pet system used in the game. As a designer, did you want to create fiercer-looking pets? Or were you already aware of the levelling-up system that the pets would have in this MMO?
In actual fact, there is a huge variety of pets in TLBB, and we don't only treat them as followers, but as weapons who can cause serious damage as well as fight for players.

Each pet has its own attributes that contribute to experience of the game, whether it's for looks or for assistance to the player.

Do you have your own pet in TLBB? If so, what is your preference? And how is it effective for you?
Yes, my pet is a bunny but don't be fooled by how cute it is because it can cause some serious damage! There are some rare pets in the upcoming expansions of TLBB that I'd love to get my hands on – let's just say that Bruce Lee's spirit comes alive in TLBB at some point. Sorry I can't say any more!

Publisher: ChangYou
Developer: ChangYou
Heritage: N/A
Link: http://tlbb.eu.changyou.com
ETA: TBA

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TERA: The Exhiled Realm of Aborea

Publisher: En Masse Entertainment
Developer: Bluehole Studios
Heritage: None
Link: www.tera-online.com
ETA: 2011

TERA firma it's not

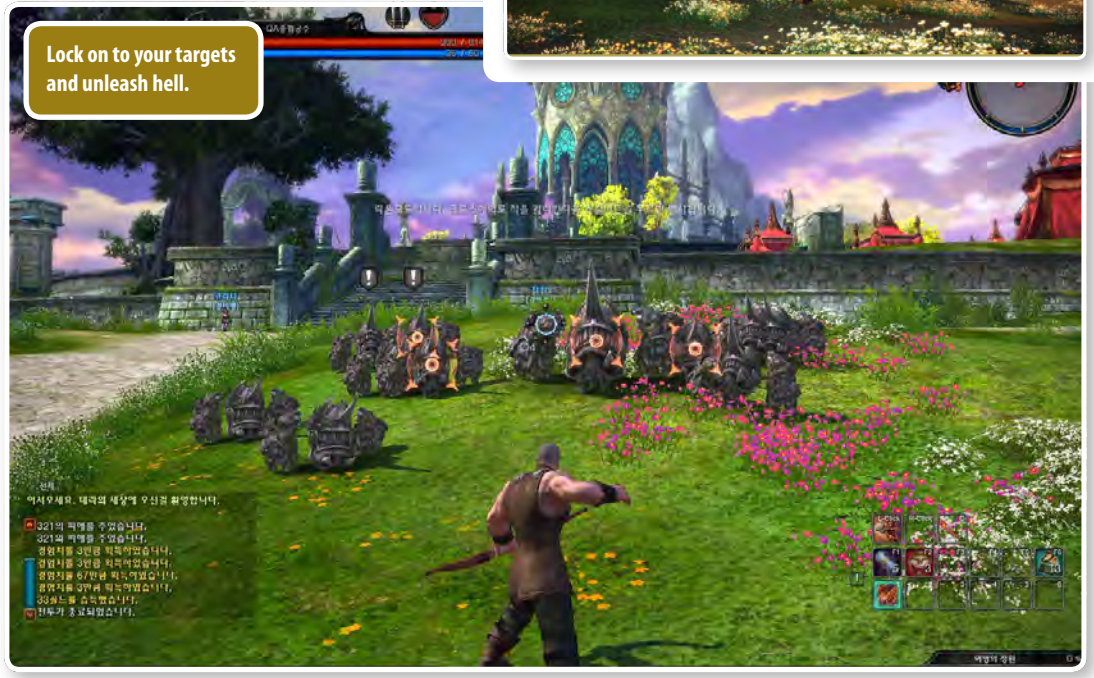
"TERA is set in a beautifully rendered world with its own fascinating lore"

Shown off at this year's E3, TERA manages to stand out from the crowds by not only looking absolutely gorgeous but also allowing players to wield super-sized weaponry. That's always a good thing right? It is, of course, hard not to make comparisions with Aion which remains once of the most graphically intense MMOs on the market, but TERA feels more like Final Fantasy on steroids, mixing all the best aspects of MMOs and RPGs into one shiny title.

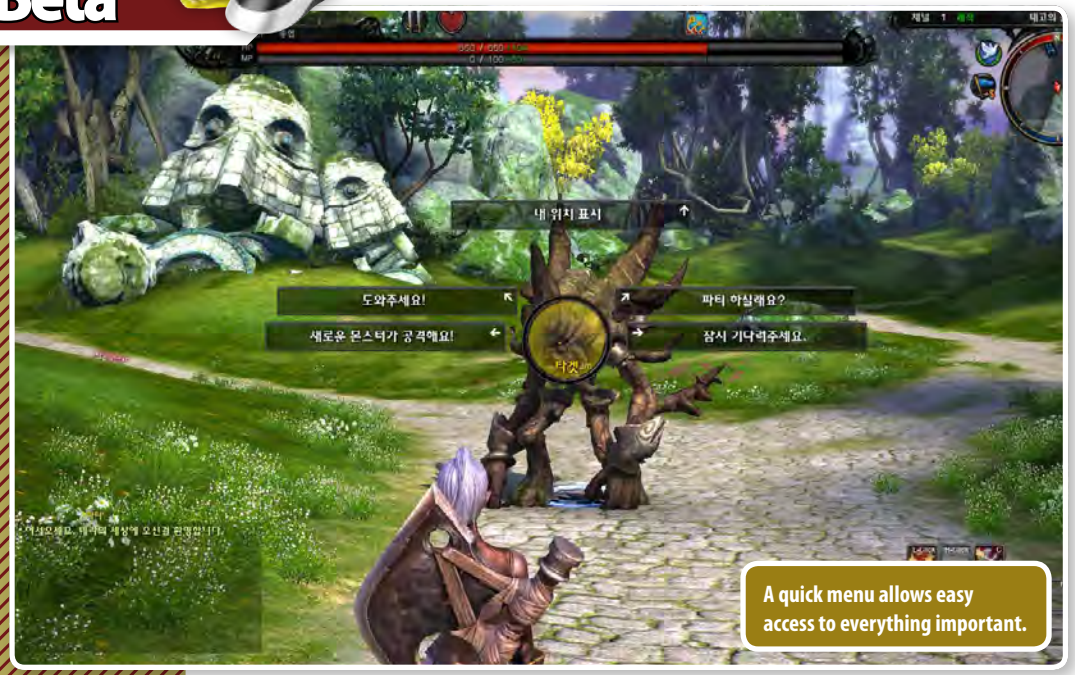
Being touted by its developers as 'the first true action MMO', TERA is set in a beautifully rendered world with its own fascinating lore, the archetypal classes and, of course, an interesting mix of human, demon and fluffy animal races. The in-game lore explains that the land itself was created by the bodies of two sleeping titans named Shara and Arun, who then proceeded to dream the various races into reality.

The races themselves feature the usual mix, including the ubiquitous humans and gorgeous High Elves, there are the Castanics with their slightly demony appearance, the reptilian Amani, the gigantic Baraka and the sentient animal spirits called Popori (which is pronounced a little like potpourri).

Likewise, there are some familiar and some not so familiar classes. A Priest by any other name is still a Healer, for example, likewise a Mystic is just a fancy name for a Mage. TERA also introduces a collection of classes not always found in MMOs. For example, we have the Archer who focuses on ranged DPS, the Slayer who does some amazing damage (with a giant sword to boot), the Beserker who falls into the tank spot and the Lancer who comes equipped with a polearm that even a Knight of Camelot would be proud of. Indeed, only one archetype seems to be lacking and that's



Lock on to your targets and unleash hell.



A quick menu allows easy access to everything important.

How cute is that Popori merchant?

TERA continued

a sneaky Rogue which is down, the devs say, to the choices made by MMO players when they group up.

With a focus more on tanking and DPS, TERA offers an interesting choice by offering classes that players are actually more likely to play. At the same time, in this early stage of development, the final product could easily see more additions to the classes offered. However, none of the numerous tanking or DPS classes seem to conflict, rather offering different ways to get the job done that will appeal to people who already have familiarity with the archetypes in games like Aion, WoW or Guild Wars.

The moment you first see characters in combat though, it's hard not to notice that something's different, even if it takes a minute to figure out what. TERA's combat system is just like any other MMO's but there's a little RPG in there too. For example, the press preview had a

This, though you might not know it, is the party loot window.

WHAT A CUTIE!

Of all the races in TERA, the most interesting has to the animal-based Popori. The website features artwork depicting possible character choices as a cat, a panda and a bear. The racial section furthers speculation by explaining that this race are 'the fierce animal guardians and the magical divine spirits living in the Kingdom of Poporion'. While the official explanation is interesting, it don't help get over the fact that the Popori are rather cute. But it doesn't specify what kind of Popori we'll be able to create. Cats and bears are great but what else will there be? Of all the races in TERA, this one seems to have the most potential. After all, who wants to be a boring human or a mundane Elf when you can be cute and furry instead?

TERA continued

party fight a 'group monster' – a mob which can be soloed only if you have awesome gear, so will usually need a party to down it. In this case, the said mob was a giant crab.

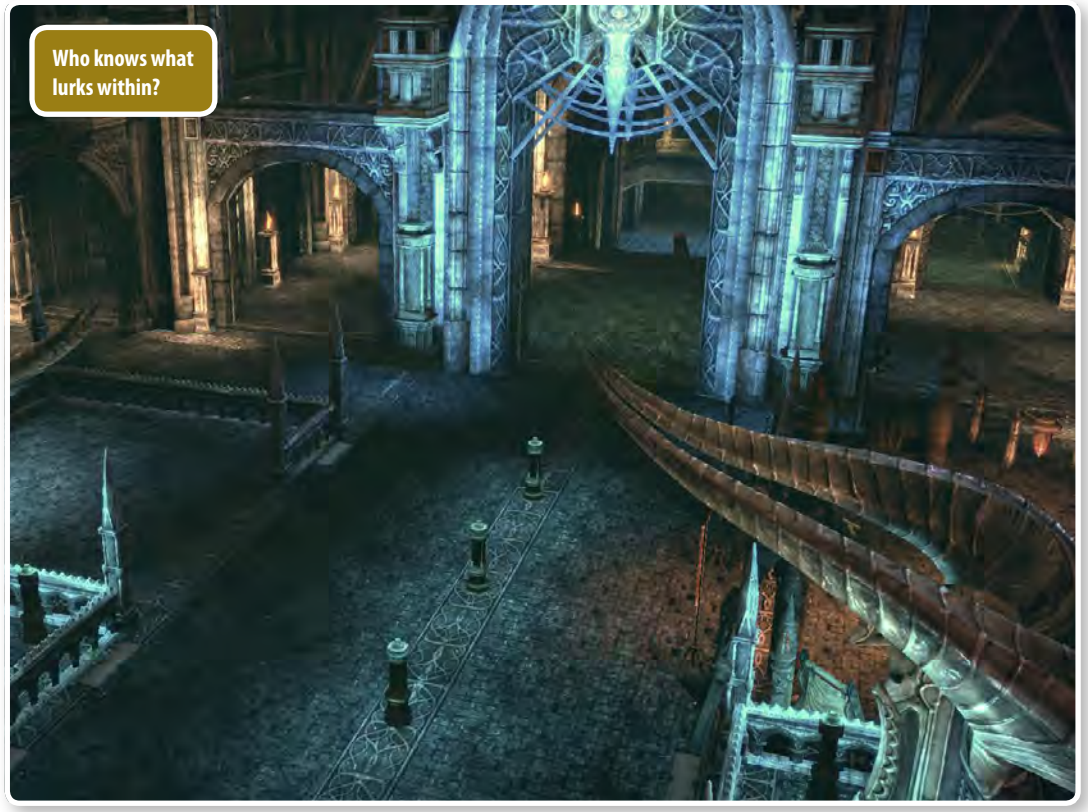
Playing the role

The fighting is reminiscent of a very fast version of the turn-based Final Fantasy style but without the need to click through endless menus or take turns. At the same time, the mobs tower above you and seem more like mini-raid bosses than just souped-up trash. Heck, the crab even has its own special attack that you have to keep an eye out for in order to avoid becoming a bloody puddle (seriously) at its feet. The developers explain that these mobs have tells, a movement which will signal that they're about to try to kill you, and you have a second to see it and move.

Some classes are better at moving than others. The Warrior can dodge out of the way much like a console hero, but the Priest has to be more careful and actively move out of the way so he can keep his companions alive. Part of the appeal though is how much TERA feels like a console RPG over a typical MMO – there's certainly plenty of action and challenge when it comes to gameplay. The addition of the high level of graphics and gorgeous 3D world, rich in landscapes and denizens, makes this an even more appealing title now that gamers are starting to expect console-level graphics in their PC-based MMOs.

"The fighting is reminiscent of a very fast version of the turn-based Final Fantasy style"

While nowhere near ready just yet – the game is scheduled to ship in 2011 – it's a promising look at what could be one of the MMOs of the future, where game design and graphics meld together to create something which is more RPG than MMO. TERA's appearance at E3 has only managed to whet the appetites of MMO gamers, who have a new title to add to their must-play list.


Who knows what lurks within?

Realistic water is the next level in cool.

MMOZine Verdict

Nice visuals and huge weapons, TERA is definitely one to keep an eye on

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Publisher: Star Vault
Developer: Star Vault
Heritage: None
Link: www.mortalonline.com
OUT NOW

Mortal Online

An oasis of Ultima-inspired riches, or a mirage?

"Of all the so-called sandbox MMOs, Mortal Online appears to be the one with the most sand"

Of all the so-called sandbox MMOs, Mortal Online appears to be the one with the most sand. It might even be a desert, but it's hard to make out if that's just because sand is all there is, and therefore a proportionate measure of what isn't in the game, or that it really is as conceptually liberating and potentially brilliant as many want it to be.

The thing with deserts though, is that while standing on the edge can be an awe-inspiring sight, if you walk across it unprepared you'll likely not make it out without some measure of contempt for your surroundings.

Let's take the character creation process as an example. It's full of interesting ideas, and age matters – older means wiser, but weaker. Height gives you strength, while a compact frame bestows resilience. Unfortunately you're not told how best to select ancestry or race, or where to distribute attribute points. Like most things in the game, learning is best achieved outside of it, else by way of frustrating trial and error.

Spawning at a town you're pretty much left to your own devices. There's no tutorial, no nearby exclamation marks to right-click, no signposts at all. There's no in-game map either. It's not an oversight, it's one of a

That way be Sausage Lake.

CHARACTER ABERRATION

Underneath, it's a powerful character creation system, but physical options are scant. Regardless of ancestry, race, gender or age, you will end up gruff and hairy, and with your head a slightly different colour to your body. As a bonus, you get a hat made of pigeon feathers (the game calls it a hairstyle) and genitalia.

Thankfully, you don't get much chance to see your character much after that, except in shadow, but of course others do. And you see

them – some conducting their business in the buff. If you're offended by non-functioning erectile tissue, steer clear.

Mortal Online cont.

number of nods to realism and immersion that the game makes. There are of course player-made maps, even a 3D one, so finding your way around isn't totally beyond your means, but knowing your precise location is without getting to know your landmarks. Whether you like the idea of spending hours lost will be a matter of taste, but the very fact you can is certainly unique for MMO.

Different too is night from day. The days are long, but when night falls it *really* falls. In the country you can't see a thing without a torch and with one you are a beacon for every thief around. If you know the lay of the land, night-time mining or tree-felling is a lucrative way to gather resources. The sound of pick against rock may attract hunters, but it's easy to run and hide once you hear the ominous sound of a weapon being unsheathed behind you.

Combat is, if you excuse the terrible pun, very hit and miss. Real-time rather than target and timer-based, you left-click to chop and right-click to block, with context added depending on your movement. It seems to be a little more involved than the melee system in Mount & Blade, which is really very good, but in Mortal isn't anywhere near as smooth or as visually appealing, sadly.

As you move on from your trusty sword – perhaps to bows, spell and pole-arms – combat becomes more tactical, especially in small groups, but while the immediacy of the locked first-person view adds to the drama, and the open-nature of the PvP system heaps on yet more tension, the fact is that actual toe-to-toe combat is unconvincing.

For all their efforts in trying to make Nave feel like an actual place as opposed to the paper-thin environments of other fantasy

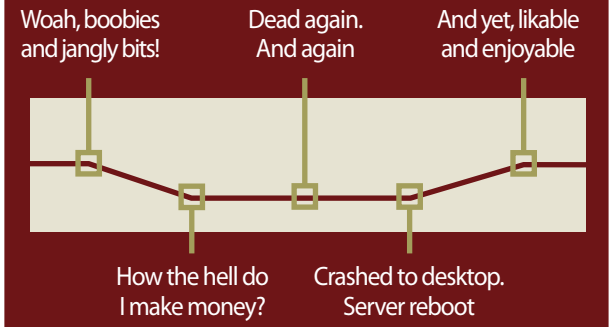
THE SKILL'S THE LIMIT

Skills are increased through use – word cutting via chopping trees, swords by killing things, etc. It's a simple system that is often criticised because it entices people to use macros and bots. The developers may have found a way around this however by limiting the number of Primary skill points a player can amass. Each skill has a ceiling of 100, but you only have 1,000 skill points, meaning that being the best at everything is utterly impossible.

It is possible to 'untrain' skills, so getting locked into a career isn't a problem.

Ah c'mon, there's always got to be skeletons in an MMO.

PULSOMETER: Signs of life


Woah, boobies and jangly bits!
Dead again. And again
And yet, likable and enjoyable
How the hell do I make money?
Crashed to desktop. Server reboot

Mortal Online cont.

MMOs, Mortal falls down in one key area: quality control. Some of the amusing graphical peculiarities include seeing horses trotting along on their heads, NPCs multiplying before your very eyes, and the always pleasing sight of items and characters floating in mid-air. It doesn't happen enough to warrant any sustained sense of anger, but enough to pose the question than if so much is haywire on the surface, how much is broken or fudged underneath? Lines of feedback text seem to get lost, or repeat themselves minutes or hours later. It becomes utterly confusing to be attempting to tame a horse, to fail, then to be told you've succeeded in taming a weasel, and that you're losing health to something who attacked you two hours ago.

As misguided as it is to review a game based on its potential to be brilliant rather than the fact it clearly isn't, it's hard to come away from Mortal Online with a thorough dislike of the game. Mostly this is because the world on which Mortal is set feels more like a place than a setting. It's certainly not a living, breathing world, but there seems to be an emphasis on providing experiences rather than experience points.

Even bearing in mind that Mortal Online was released because it had to be, rather than because it was ready to be, only the most forgiving players should really think about investing any of their time (or money) in it, and should do so mindful that it's the game's potential rather than it's present state that they will be pouring their subscriptions and time into.

COME TO THE DARKFALL SIDE

If you've played Darkfall Online and utterly hated it, it's likely you will have the same feelings for Mortal Online. Indeed, Mortal could be the worst game you ever bought. If, however, you felt that Darkfall was your cup of tea – but just not the right blend – then Mortal might just be to your exacting tastes. Just be aware that it's still brewing…

MMOZine Verdict

A game for those with faith, not expectation

- ✓ Compelling gameworld and mechanics
- ✗ Steep, slow learning curve with poor documentation
- ✗ Still in Beta, effectively

World of Warcraft: 3.3.5

Blurring the boundaries

Publisher: Blizzard Entertainment
Developer: Blizzard Entertainment
Heritage: StarCraft, Diablo II, Warcraft series
Link: www.wow-europe.com
OUT NOW

Time is moving swiftly on in Azeroth and something is in the air. Malgyos is dead, and the new Lich King is keeping the Scourge in check. Time to kick back and relax, right? Well, not a chance. Something is stirring beneath Wrymrest Temple, the Black Dragonflight are once more on the offensive and it's your job as an Azerothian champion to do something about it.

Nameless but for its number, 3.3.5 is the penultimate patch and we're no longer in Wrath territory, rather these patches are adding cool new gaming mechanics and paving the way for Cataclysm, which has just entered its closed Beta. Compared to other patches, this one might feel lightweight but there are some pretty hefty changes, most notably the introduction of Real ID, Blizzard's take on in-game social networking.

On the offensive

Deathwing is coming, and the new raid which sees players assaulting on Ruby Sanctum offers the first tantalising hints of the expansion to come. Kirin Tor Mage Rhonin sends you to Krasus, his old friend from the Red Dragonflight, and he gives you the bad news. The Red Dragonflight's sanctuary has been overrun by agents of Deathwing – Halion and his three minions, Saviana Ragefire, Baltharus the Warborn and General Zarithian. Corpses of red dragons litter the

Krasus wants you to investigate the Ruby Sanctum.
Krasus
Assault on the Sanctum
Night Elf, something terrible has transpired within the Ruby Sanctum beneath the Temple.
The entry to the Sanctum is in ruins, and its guardians violently slain. We sent scouts to investigate, but they have not returned. I cannot help but fear the worst.
Enter the Ruby Sanctum and discover what has befallen the home of my flight. Once we have more information, we can plan our next steps accordingly.
Quest Objectives
Investigate the Ruby Sanctum beneath Wrymrest Temple.
Rewards
You will receive: 13g 50s
Accept
Decline
[Jack dahl] has gone offline.
[Kartarellen] has earned the achievement [Three Car Garage (10 player)]!

You'll be notified when they come online, whatever the character.
Flame Warden Serisa
<Yeti Employment Agency>
Andrew Talbot has come online.
[1. Trade] [Richbo]: LFM ICC25 starting at 21:00 - link at least proff achievement and GS
[1. Trade] [Aoifé]: LF1M melee dps for RS - link gs
[Andrew Talbot] is now a Real ID friend.
[Andrew Talbot] has come online.

WoW: 3.3.5 continued

leafy glade and black dragonkin stalk, practically begging you to pick a fight.

In some ways, this raid is reminiscent of the Obsidian Sanctum, only turned up to the Nth degree. There are even more trash mobs to clear – and they pack a punch to boot – as well as the dragon lieutenants, before you finally get to face the Twilight Dragon, Halion, the self-proclaimed Herald of Deathwing. The raid set-up might be simple but don't be fooled, the loot is on the same level as that dropped by the Lich King, so this is not going to be a walk in the park. Yes, the multi-night wipefest raid is back with a vengeance, but the inclusion of the Ruby Sanctum will keep players entertained in those slow months to Cataclysm. At the same time, it should also prompt you to get out of Dalaran and revisit the old world and finish all those epic quests. Time is short and Deathwing is coming…

BlizzBook

Real ID has been sometime coming, but has been rolled out with this patch to tie-in with the release of StarCraft II, Blizzard's other big franchise which will finally be released at the end of July. Battle.net is not new, it's been the foundation stone for all of Blizzard's other titles from Diablo and Warcraft III to the original StarCraft. It's also become an important backbone for World of Warcraft since the introduction of Battle.net accounts and authenticators. Real ID takes this to the next level by allowing gamers to befriend other players and keep in contact with them whether they are levelling in Outland, fighting Diablo or zerging in StarCraft.

Like the systems created by the Big Three console makers, Blizzard has decided mutual agreement is the way to go. To get someone's Real ID, you need either their email address (yes, the one they use to access WoW) or you can add them by trolling through other people's lists (which is a lot harder than it sounds). You then add them and if they want to, they can

ENTERING THE RUBY SANCTUM

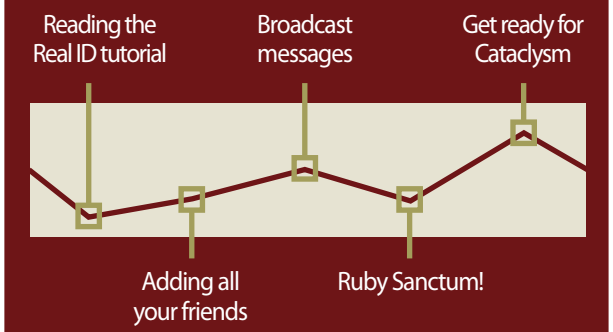
The fun starts here…

A NEW PORTAL | **BLACK WINS** | **TWILIGHT DRAGON**

A new portal has opened, but expect to die before you enter.

Saviana is the a walk in the park compared to Halion.

PULSOMETER: Signs of life



WoW: 3.3.5 continued

add you and will then appear under their real name in your friends' list.

You'll be able to see each time they log on – regardless of game, realm or character – and will even be updated whenever they decided to change whether they are available, busy or away, or broadcast a Facebook-like status message.

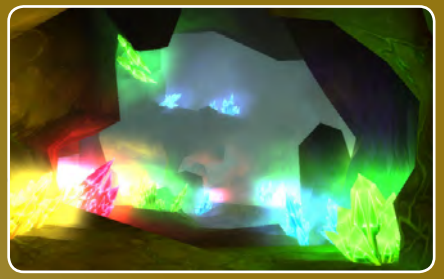
Yes, this new system is fun and frivolous, and it's also ripe for misuse – there's a profanity filter in place – but also a nice way to communicate in this world of social networking. Want to broadcast your innermost thoughts or just suggest a trip out for an impromptu raid? Go for it.

The only downside to this is that it can be very disconcerting when someone whispers you using their real name and you have to check your friends' list to find out who they are. If you're after a private chit-chat you can whisper as normal or invite a couple of players for a chat. It's worth reiterating that Real ID is voluntary and you can completely ignore it if you want; the old friends system remains (you'll find characters underneath Real ID friends).

As Cataclysm comes ever closer, it's clear Blizzard are trying to do their best to implement new features that will enhance the gameplay experience as well as keep folk occupied in the pre-expansion lull. Real ID is fun but based on the social networks we know and love – it's a new fun way to make the game a little bit more down with the current trends of geekdom. The Ruby Sanctum is short and tough. Looks are deceiving but it's sure to keep people occupied while they wait for those oh-so-precious Beta invites. ●

THE POINT OF NO RETURN

This is a pivotal time for Azeroth, as in a few short months – if the release schedule is still 2010 – everything we know will change forever. Normally the summer lull – and pre-expansion boredom – mean the last thing you want to do is play WoW but this is the time to do it. Kalimdor and the Eastern Kingdoms are literally going to be rewritten, so now


Transformation. Take the time to explore all those places you've never gone to, as they might not be there in a few months.

MMOZine Verdict

Real ID is promising and Ruby Sanctum's great fun

- ✓ Ruby Sanctum
- ✓ Real ID
- ✗ No other content

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Everything we know about Treyarch's best CoD yet!
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Publisher: Hi-Rez Studios
Developer: Hi-Rez Studios
Heritage: N/A
Link: www.globalagendagame.com
OUT NOW

Global Agenda: Sandstorm

Not so much an expansion as an overhaul

If you didn't get with the combat style before then you still won't.

An oasis of Ultimalt's been six months since Global Agenda seemed to prove that the rebirth of the MMOFPS was a non-event. In that time, rather than roll over and die, Hi-Rez Studios have been relentless to the point of desperation in their collective efforts to convince people that they were on to something all along.

On the one hand, Global Agenda is almost unrecognisable from the game we first played back in February. As part of the Sandstorm expansion, it has solo missions, there are a new maps proving that the world does have some colour to it and extra shops have opened in Dome City. The biggest gameplay change is the ripping out of the old crafting and loot system, it being replaced by something much more becoming of an MMO.

Fundamentally, it's the action that counts, and aside from some new weapons and a jet pack that allows you to fire while flying about – it's still very much based around imprecise small squad combat dominated more by timer-based abilities rather than FPS skill. You either like it or you don't, or like us, you can like and dislike it at the same time.

It's recent changes to the subscription system that are more interesting. The fact that it's been done away with entirely means if you bought the game, you can engage in end-game Alliance warfare as much as you like, which is now set across one map. There is even a trial that limits players to level 15, which is ample opportunity to gauge whether the game is for you. You might want do that soon, because at this rate, in six months it might be totally different once again. ●

More maps that are less boxy is very welcome.

MMOZine Verdict

Sandstorm has whipped this shooter into shape

- ✓ Vastly improved crafting and loot system
- ✓ A bigger, braver world
- ✗ Still feels small

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Publishing Director: Dave Taylor
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